

EXPRESSING the BUDÔ

**A TRADITIONAL JAPANESE
BUDÔ DICTIONARY**
with essays to stimulate further thought.

***Tony Annesi,
BUSHIDÔ-KAI KENKYUKAI***

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EXPRESSING THE BUDO, A Traditional Japanese Budo Dictionary

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NOTES FROM THE AUTHOR

In this concise dictionary meant for more English speaking advanced martial artists with little or no Japanese language skills, I have included words and expressions beyond the normal basics which most students pick up. You will find very few words like GI (training uniform) or HAKAMA (divided skirt originally worn by samurai), DOJO (way-place; training hall) or BUSHIDO (“the way of the warrior”; a samurai ethical code), nor will you find many technique names which should be available from one’s instructor or federation. Some waza which use varied names are included but are far from exhaustive. A compilation of waza names would make a fine separate volume.

Admittedly, what is too basic to include and what is advanced enough to warrant inclusion is a matter of judgment. Therefore I must take full responsibility for the items herein. I considered including even more esoteric references from judo, aiki, and karate as well as many parts of the body and encyclopedic references, but I backed off when I realized that the volume would no longer be concise. Please refer to published works (see bibliography) for more complete treatments of some subjects.

I have also, after some rumination, decided to include traditional karate and judo kata names since so many practitioners have no way to research these meanings easily.

The senior should already be aware that the pronunciations offered here are not the only pronunciations acceptable in the Japanese language and that in many cases different words have the same pronunciations. Since this is not an ideograph dictionary, I have made no visual distinction between, for example, KEN (*sword*, also pronounced TO) and KEN (*fist*, probably a truncation of GENKOTSU).

Although I have attempted to be accurate and to cross-reference whenever possible, I am not a Japanese scholar, nor am I fluent in the language. All errors are therefore, of course, my own. Students should check each use themselves or with a native Japanese budoka before assuming accuracy.

This volume is actually four dictionaries as one. The first dictionary is a Japanese (Romaji) to English Budo Jiten (dictionary), the second arranges the same words for English speaking people but by subject. The third is an English to Japanese Budo Jiten, the fourth arranges the same words for English speaking people by subject since it is often difficult to find a word in Japanese when you are not sure of the English. In the dictionaries organized by subject, words may be listed under several topics. These references are constructed so that a student who may not know the desired word (or may know only part of it) can more easily solicit it. The student would then look up the Japanese word in the first dictionary to be sure of its intended meaning.

The Japanese language is imprecise (by Western standards) in order to retain a suggestibility which may vary with situations. The Japanese language does not “mean” so much as it “feels”. Even native Japanese disagree with the interpretations of certain terms. I therefore do not wish to imply that my interpretations are by any means more accurate or precise than those of others.

To help the English speaking person with Japanese pronunciation, I have included the instructions on the next page. Please understand that there are lilt and other niceties in common Japanese pronunciation which I have not attempted to include. This is not a language text by any means. I hope to help the student render respectable and understandable, if not exhaustively exact, Japanese pronunciation.

My original purpose in writing this reference was twofold: (1) to present my own senior students with a way to refer to words they may hear or see in print or in the dojo, and (2) to create a stimulus for philosophical reflection and further research. That purpose has expanded into making other Japanese stylists aware of the richness of concepts and detail in their arts.

— Tony Annesi

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

I used a modified Hepburn system (the method used in most modern transliterations) to render the *romaji* (Romanized script). Once a few basic lessons are understood, the words, with some important exceptions, are self-pronouncing.

Japanese has the same five vowels as English but Japanese usually list them in a different order: a, i, u, e o.

a is pronounced as in *hard* (*ah*)

i is pronounced as the *y* in *easy* (*ee*)

u is pronounced as in *rune* (*oo*)

e is pronounced as in *get* (*eh*)

o is pronounced as in *coat* (*oh*).

In this book I have not noted the long vowels (vowels which take a double beat to pronounce) as in BUDO which is really budô or “boo-do-oh.” In Japanese, medial *i*’s and final *u*’s are not pronounced so much as breathed, so that SHITO sounds like *sh’toh*, OSU sounds like *os’* and JUTSU sounds like *juts’*.

Individual consonants are pronounced as in English with the exception of the *r* which is never rolled but sounds more like an upper class British *l* as in *television* (*tedivision*). So, RYU is not *roo* or *reeoo* but closer to *dyoo*.

When consonants come together, the English speaking student should take care to give equal weight to each consonant. SHIKKO is not *shik-o* or *shee-ko* but *sheek-koh*.

The letter *g* between two vowels often takes on a nasal sound like a Spanish *ñ*. This is most commonly heard in *Arigato-gozai-masu* (thank you for what you have done) pronounced *ariñ-gahto-go zayee-mas’*.

Normally, each syllable has a clear, separate, equally stressed pronunciation which is why one often sees hyphens (-) separating parts of Japanese words

in *romaji*. There is however, no standard method of hyphenating them. One does not put a heavy stress on any syllable. KARATE is not *ka-RAH-tay*, but *ka-rah-tay*.

Of course each geographical area of Japan has regional differences but if you adhere to this guide you should be understood by most Japanese speakers.

DICTIONARY ONE

JAPANESE to ENGLISH TERMS

A

AGO- chin

AIKI-NO-SEN- “initiative of spiritual harmony”: to take advantage of an opponent’s attitude

AI-NUKE- situation where two opponents are not able to fight because of their united mental state

Are they afraid of each other or just respectful of each other? Or, has their fear turned into respect which has turned into a macho sort of friendship, a harmony (*ai*) which goes beyond simply having the same skills? *Ai-nuke* is a term which describes opponents neither of whom can strike each other not only because of superior defenses but also because of mutual alertness, skill, perhaps because of mutual understanding.

Nuke in another context, for example, is the unsheathing of a sword. *Nuke* itself actually comes from the verb *nukeru* which suggests slipping out of position, omission, escaping. Both contestants then are seen either to mutually experience unpreparedness (presumably because they were both so very prepared) or they are seen to mutually experience an escape or release from the contest. *Ai-nuke*, then, is a sort of peace through power. It is having enough weaponry and strong enough defenses so that both combatants hesitate

to use them. They not only fear and respect their opponents, but they see themselves in their opponent. Do they then fear and respect themselves?

The macho answer is, of course, that they respect themselves but fear no one. In fact, they fear their own potential reaction to the powerful opponent as much as the opponent himself. Fighters ignore that fear within themselves but during times of mature reflection, they silently admit it to themselves. The result is that they are proud that they were strong and stood up against such a foe, but a little embarrassed that a bit of their humanity was sacrificed to their ego.

Without the ego, no one fights. Without the ability to fight, however, no one can defend himself. Ego is neither negative nor positive, only its manifestations are. It is positive ego to feel pride and respect. It is negative ego to demand respect in order that one can feel proud. Confidence is positive ego, conceit is negative ego. The reason *ai-nuke* is regarded so highly in Japanese martial arts is that it is seen as a manifestation of positive ego. That there be one occurrence of this is not remarkable but that, in any given encounter, there be two occurrences of equally positive egos is not only unusual, its resolution of non-conflict is how the martial ways rose above the combat skills of ancient warriors.

Ai-nuke is mental philosophy born of physical skill, a physical peace born of the conflict of mental attitudes.

AITE- partner, symbolic opponent

ANI-DESHI- a “big-brother” or senior disciple

ANTEI- equilibrium, stability

AOMUKI-NI- on one’s back

ASA-GEIKO- “morning training”: training which takes place during the hottest days of the summer (counterpart to *kan-geiko*)

ASHI- foot, leg

ASHIKUBI- ankle

ASHI-NO-KO- instep

ATAMA- head

ATO-NO-SEN- defensive initiative, usually through a simultaneous or nearly simultaneous block and counter; sometimes the “defender” will attack first because he/she mentally perceives the attacking intent of the opponent (see *go-no-sen*)

A(U)- to agree with, to harmonize with; suggests doing the same thing, not necessarily with love or gentleness (from which we get the *ai* of aikido)

AYUMI- a step or pace

AYUMI-ASHI- “normal walking”, especially in judo

It is ironic that one should have to learn how to walk “normally” but it

is not without precedent.

In the armed services, young men are “broken down” in order to be built up again. Boys are converted to warriors by first making them children again. They are told what to do, what they cannot do. They are pushed to obey quickly and accurately. They are punished if they do not. It is no wonder that, like teenagers free for the first time while mom and dad vacation in Vegas, young soldiers rabble-rouse and get into trouble in the civilian parts of town. They have some tension to release and need to try out a freedom which is not allowed when the officers are around.

In many systems of martial training, the same thing happens. “Put a white belt on them, and they are all babies,” a senior aikido sensei once said. At least symbolically then, the various budo take students through steps analogous to parents taking children through their first steps. Such action notifies the student that he is in a new world now and that he should begin learning about his new life as children do, with a blank slate, without pre-conceived notions.

But soldiers are made to obey in order to make the fighting unit more efficient which, in turn, helps to protect both the soldier and that which he is fighting to protect. Children are made to obey to make the family unit run more smoothly which, in turn, helps the child run his own life more effectively as an adult. Effective adults make societal living better for all of us.

Why do so many people, both children and adults, choose to enter a martial art where they will be told how to walk, how to put on their clothes, how to show politeness, how to treat each other? Perhaps they are willing to tolerate all these trappings in order to become steely soldiers, brawny *bushi*, powerful pugilists. Or perhaps they are willing to tolerate the implied violence to rearrange their own upbringing. It is not that mom and dad did not do a good job, it is that the child did not have a choice in shaping himself. In budo, the “child” grows up consciously. He may be treated like a child first, but he can earn his new maturity with attendant adult reflection. And be proud, not of his parents’ accomplishment, but of his own.

B

BAIKEI- collateral system: a separate but parallel development of the main branch of a system

It happened then as it happens now, that one student having not inherited a system, simply goes off to found a new system which was nearly identical to the old, save, of course, for its head instructor. Then, as now, this happened sometimes because of disagreements between instructor and student, but there were also instances where Japanese customs simply collided so as to make it almost necessary for a *baikei* to develop.